



JEFFREY S. MOHRE, SUPERINTENDENT

Washington Township Schools

~ A Community of 21st-Century Learners ~

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Good Evening WTS Faculty, Staff and Families:

Thank you all for your patience, inquiries, and feedback as we prepare to welcome our young people back to school. WTS is proceeding with both care and caution in developing a plan that underscores safety and instructional consistency for the children and adults of our school community. We continue to work diligently to finalize a plan that best realizes these two goals.

Your Washington Township Schools has reached a point in its school reopening planning process whereby additional details can now be shared with members of the school community. I know everyone can appreciate the complexities of this monumental task and I thank you once again for your patience as we strive to address countless details. That being said, I feel comfortable and confident in sharing the following information with you. Certainly, more information will be forthcoming as planning remains a very fluid process.

Please review the following information as it relates to WTS' various school reopening planning lenses and the Department of Education's guidance document.

PHYSICAL HEALTH {CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING - GENERAL HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES}

In order to best support the health and wellness of students and their families, and the staff and faculty, the Washington Township Schools (WTS) has set the following operational standards as schools reopen amid the current pandemic:

- **SOCIAL DISTANCING** (6 feet) within the school setting will be realized to the maximum extent possible as a means of mitigating the potential spread of COVID-19.
- **CLASS SIZE** will be **reduced** by adopting a district-wide **A/B 2-Day Rotating Schedule Model** to start the school year (children will come to school based on their assigned group).
- **THE A/B STRUCTURE:** The definitive A/B Structure will be shared this Friday. As shared last evening, Governor Murphy's recently announced Full-Day Remote Learning Option for Families will result in a slight delay of solidifying student cohorts associated with the A/B model as we receive possible additional requests for the option outlined by the Governor. We are striving mightily for Wednesday, August 5th.
- **FACE COVERINGS - ADULTS:** Face coverings will be worn by all faculty and staff (unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health). WTS will provide every faculty/staff member with 2 cloth face coverings and 1 face shield. Bus drivers will wear a face covering while on the bus at all times when students are present.
- **FACE COVERINGS - CHILDREN:** Children will be required to wear face coverings for most of their school day (unless doing so would inhibit the individual's health). WTS will be providing face coverings (a traditional face mask and a face shield) to all students. This does not necessarily mean that children will wear both all day long. Faculty will utilize outdoor spaces, as available and permissible by weather, to afford students and

staff opportunities to secure additional space and 'distancing,' take 'face covering breaks,' and learn outdoors. WTS will set guidelines for staff to implement with children based on such factors as social distancing, hallway travel, outdoor lessons/recesses, arrival/departure etc. A lanyard will accompany the traditional cloth face mask to best ensure that masks are not misplaced or left behind at the end of the day.

- **STAY HOME ORDERS** are in effect for all students and staff members who are not feeling well.
- **WELLNESS & TEMPERATURE CHECKS - CHILDREN:**
 1. **CHECK 1:** Parents will conduct a wellness and temperature check prior to the child coming to school each day. All children and school employees must remain at home if they are not feeling well or have a fever of 100.4 or higher. Children who experience illness while at school will be safely monitored by WTS' school nurses and be sent home to rest, recover, and referred to their primary care physician.
 2. **CHECK 2:** Temperature and visual wellness checks will take place when children arrive at school each day. Checks will be conducted safely and respectfully by school district personnel. Children who appear ill will be screened further by the school nurse.
- **WELLNESS & TEMPERATURE CHECKS - STAFF:**
 1. **CHECK 1:** Screening of staff will be self-conducted. Staff members shall conduct personal wellness checks prior to coming to school each day.
 2. **CHECK 2:** A temperature check will be self-conducted by staff upon their arrival to school each day (safely and respectfully).
- A **"HEALTHY PLEDGE,"** designed to promote awareness as to the importance of establishing healthy habits, will be distributed to all parents and staff and will require a personal signature or signatures. In support of a community-wide effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
- **ILLNESSES OCCURRING AT SCHOOL** will be addressed and monitored by the School Nurse. If children or staff are not feeling well, they will be sent home to rest, recover, and referred to their primary care physician.
- **HANDWASHING & SANITIZING** will be scheduled throughout the school day and will begin before children leave their homes each day (children will also receive a squirt of hand sanitizer when boarding and exiting school buses). Designated hand cleaning times will be scheduled by the teacher(s) using soap and water and/or hand sanitizer as follows:
 - at the start of the day when children enter the classroom
 - whenever children leave the classroom
 - whenever children return to the classroom
 - *before* snacks, lunch, recess; *after* snacks, lunch, recess
 - after visiting the bathroom
 - after sneezing, wiping, and blowing noses
- **ISOLATION ROOM:** An isolation room (or quarantine room aka "Q-Room") will be identified at each school in the event a child or staff member requires isolation as a result of illness. Plans for supervising a child or adult in the Q-Room will be in place to ensure safety while arranging for transport home.
- **LIMITING STUDENT TRAVEL** during the school day to other parts/rooms of the school will be practiced to reduce the spread of illness. To the extent possible, faculty will rotate to classrooms and students will stay in a relatively fixed location throughout the school day.
- **SCHOOL VISITORS** will be strictly limited during the period of pandemic and recovery to start the school year and the use of face coverings will be strictly enforced. This will help to better safeguard school building occupants.
- **PARENT MEETINGS & EVENTS:** i.e. conferences, volunteerism, and back-to-school nights, will occur virtually during the pandemic and recovery period in order to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
- **CLEANING AND DISINFECTING** protocols will be in effect as developed and implemented by the Facilities Manager and the Custodial Teams.

- **BOARD OF HEALTH, SCHOOL MEDICAL INSPECTOR and WTS** will continue their positive working relationship throughout the pandemic and recovery period.
- **FACILITIES USE** by community groups will be suspended to start the school year in order to mitigate the potential spread of COVID-19. The District will notify the leaders of such groups and will revisit the suspension in mid October. Community group leaders will be informed at that time as to whether the suspension is lifted or continued.
- **VISUAL MARKERS/SIGNAGE:** Recognizing the need for physical distancing and community safety, school campuses will be outfitted with visual markers to identify traffic patterns, healthy distancing, and building-specific mechanisms to mitigate viral spread.
- **COVID-19 RESPONSE PROTOCOL:** School districts are currently working with their local boards of health and their school physicians to create protocols. Contact tracing, if necessary, will be coordinated in conjunction with Washington Township's local Board of Health. The Governor's Office has stated that the State Board of Health is currently developing a protocol for NJ school districts.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING {CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING - SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL NEEDS}

SUPPORTING STUDENTS: Here in the Washington Township Schools, school mental health professionals will play an even greater role in meeting the social-emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs of students beginning in the new school year. Universal supports designed to support the children's well-beings will be in place to start the new school year (planning meetings forthcoming):

- Strategies that promote strong connections with students and strategies that work to increase their positive habits (e.g., social connections, self-care strategies) and decrease negative responses (e.g., fear, anxiety).
- Events designed to help children feel physically and emotionally safe at school.
- Lessons that help children understand the feelings/emotions people may experience during a public health crisis.
- Activities that serve to strengthen student skills around emotion regulation and promote student help-seeking behaviors.

There will be an overarching emphasis on reestablishing and nurturing positive school climates and cultures.

SUPPORTING SCHOOL STAFF: One of the primary goals of the Washington Township Schools' reopening plan is to ensure that all staff - - instructional, clinical, operational, and administrative - - have the resources to feel safe and comfortable returning to the workplace. Elements of this staff support model include the following:

- Provide staff with professional learning focused on the mitigation of the spread fo COVID-19.
- Provide staff with the information, guidance, and professional learning necessary to support virtual instructional practices, health, and safety.
- Ensure that all staff receive personal protective equipment.
- Emphasize with staff the importance of the following essentials in supporting emotional/mental well-being: *Sufficient Sleep; moderate exercise, proper nutrition, and whole health (physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational).*
- Working with staff members who may need accommodations to return to in-person learning and operations.
- Support accessing emergency leave, Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), and other related Benefits as warranted.

- Prior to the start of school, teachers will be given time and training support to set up their online learning platforms and websites.

TRANSPORTATION Providing children with a safe school bus experience remains a top priority for the Washington Township Schools. To address the challenges of transporting students amid the pandemic, the following protocols are in effect to help protect the health and safety of both students and personnel:

- Training on newly established COVID-19 health and safety protocols will be provided to all members of the Transportation Team.
- In order to optimize students and driver safety, all students and drivers will be required to wear face coverings while on the bus. This is especially necessary since social distancing is not feasible due to the size limitations of the school bus construction and the need for student transportation.
- There will be 1 student per seat, with siblings sitting together.
- Socialization on the bus will not be feasible due to seating restrictions. Students must sit as close to the window as possible.
- When boarding the bus at bus stops, students will be seated starting in the rear of the bus, regardless of grade level.
- Students should NOT carry any items with them and both hands should be free to use handrails. Students will be required to use hand sanitizer upon entry to the school bus (as well as exiting) as provided by the District.
- Other than the handrail and their seat belt, students should not touch any other part of the bus.
- Parents will NOT be allowed to board buses to assist their children with their seat belts. Students must be able to buckle and unbuckle their own seat belt. Drivers may provide limited assistance as necessary and would need to move the bus to a safe position on the side of the road before providing assistance.
- Drivers will wear face coverings while students are on board.
- Loading the bus at the school in the PM, students will be assigned seats based on the order of stops on the route with the last stop sitting in the rear of the bus, moving forward to the first stop sitting in the front of the bus, again regardless of grade level.
- Unloading the bus will start with the students seated closest to the front of the bus at all times.
- Students should refrain from non-emergency conversations with the driver during loading or unloading. Friendly greetings are always encouraged!
- Drivers will sanitize their hands upon entry to the bus each day.
- Drivers will open some windows and roof hatches to promote ventilation, weather permitting.
- School buses will be disinfected after each route.

TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES {CONTINUITY OF LEARNING - TECHNOLOGY & CONNECTIVITY}

The Washington Township School District will ensure that every teacher and student has the necessary technology needed for learning in all environments - in-person, hybrid, and remote.

- The District has purchased additional Chromebooks to ensure that every child has a district-provided device.

- Teachers and students will receive technology in a scheduled pick up model prior to the start of the 2020-2021 school year.
- In the Two-Day Rotation Hybrid Model, WTS will distribute Chromebook devices at least two days prior to the first day of school in order to facilitate virtual classroom walk-thoughts prior to the children's first day.
- The Washington Township's [ACCEPTABLE USE OF COMPUTER NETWORKS/ COMPUTERS AND RESOURCES](#) remains in effect for the 2020-21 school year.
- The district purchased additional projectors and equipment to enhance the remote learning experience.
- WTS has expanded its Comcast bandwidth to accommodate the hybrid instructions model.
- To support the in-person and remote learning environments, the district has expanded its web-based resources (i.e KAMI, Screencastify).

FACILITIES {CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING - FACILITIES & CLEANING PRACTICES}

The Washington Township School district recognizes that the care and cleaning of our school buildings is a critical component to opening our schools for in-person instruction. As such all cleaning practices and procedures will be done following CDC guidelines, incorporating additional guidance from the federal EPA, state agencies and other national facility organizations.

FACILITIES & OPERATIONS:

- All heating and ventilation systems (HVAC) will be programmed to increase airflow to the maximum amount possible. Windows will be open as practical to increase air flow as needed. Classroom and office doors will remain open and bathroom doors will remain open when possible. Routine maintenance of all HVAC systems will be enhanced to ensure they are operating at optimal levels. The use of drinking fountains will be restricted however the use of water bottle fillers will be permitted.
- Appropriate signage will be installed to provide for safe passage throughout the facilities and to remind of the requirement for social distancing.
- Access to all buildings will be restricted to district personnel and students only.
- Hand sanitizer will be provided at all school entrances and throughout buildings.
- Handwashing reminder signs will be placed by all sinks as well as adequate supplies of soap and paper towels.

FACILITY CLEANING PRACTICES:

- The district has enhanced its existing cleaning protocols to reflect the most current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines.
- Appropriate supplies, equipment and training will be provided to the custodial staff to ensure that the district's enhanced cleaning protocols will be executed. Additional equipment purchased includes electrostatic sprayers, room foggers and UV technology. All disinfectants utilized will be in accordance with the EPA registered list.
- The District will increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of all high touch point areas. These areas include:
 - Classroom desks and chairs
 - Door handles and push plates
 - Handrails
 - Bathrooms
 - Light Switches
 - Handles on equipment
 - Desktops
 - Tables
 - School bus seats and windows
 - Playground equipment

- Instructional materials
- Telephones
- Elevator buttons
- Bathrooms will be sanitized multiple times per day.

INSTRUCTION AND SCHOOL OPERATIONS {CONDITIONS FOR/CONTINUITY OF LEARNING}

A PRE-K THROUGH GRADE EIGHT OVERVIEW FOR FACULTY AND FAMILIES

The Washington Township School District will offer instructional programs using in-person, hybrid, and remote learning environments during the 2020-21 school year. In keeping with the NJDOE “The Road Back” documentation and supporting guidelines, instructional models have been developed that promote the continuity of student learning and consistent application of the learning standards outlined in the district’s curriculum. Harnessing the technologies adopted by the district over the last several years, coupled with improvements in bandwidth and device availability, all of the district’s schools are poised to administer and deliver rich and engaging academic programming for the students. This programming, in concert with the overarching focus on meeting the needs of the whole child, will continue a tradition of promoting the overall development of the students of Washington Township.

The Professional Community is committed, as always, to promoting a sense of belonging, community, and acceptance among all members of the school. “Curriculum” will take a ‘back seat’ as we launch this school year so we can deploy time to the important activities that promote a healthy and dynamic environment that supports learning. Our Wellness Teams, School Counselors, and Child Study Teams will work cooperatively to identify occasions and mechanisms to deploy services and/or experiences to continue to promote and develop the spirit of the Washington Township Schools’ Community.

The A/B Two-Day Rotating Schedule “Hybrid” Model will include the traditional instructional program components: Master school schedules, district curricula, instructional programs and practices, and assessment and reporting of progress. Specials/Related Arts will be delivered in the classroom to the extent possible in a 36 day consecutive model (e.g. art for 36 days, followed by music, etc.). Lunch and recess will continue but revised to support newly developed health and safety protocols.

The hybrid model (2-Day Rotating Schedule Model) allows opportunities for varied instructional modalities, including those enhanced via technologies, to support learning and socialization through the use of a Chromebook. Using the District’s technology infrastructure, students not physically present in school on any given day will be connected to their classroom via the District’s robust technology platform. This will enable children to actively participate in the daily activities/lessons of the classroom based on the integrated camera and microphone components of the Chromebook computer. It will be expected that students arrive at their classroom on time through Google Meet as attendance will be monitored per WTS policy. Both students and their teachers are required to keep the camera on so that the teacher can connect, support remote learning, monitor pupil progress and remain aware of the social emotional needs of students. While at home, elementary students will continue to participate in a Morning Meeting to support their connection to the classroom and to their classmates. Middle-level students will attend (at a minimum) the “launch” of their class periods as well other Virtual Learning periods outlined in their schedules. All WTS students will participate in live instruction for mini-lessons, small group and/or whole class activities planned by the teacher during their instructional blocks/periods in addition to their specials/related arts classes. Special education programming will reflect the

current array of program options. Related services will be delivered in person to the greatest extent possible. As part of WTS' ongoing commitment to fostering the social-emotional development of students, all WTS professionals will remain cognizant and attuned to the "screen time" demands placed on students.

The remote model aligns with the in-person instructional program, with necessary accommodations for teaching, learning, and socialization through the use of a Chromebook. Accommodations for distance-learning may include modified assessment models, opportunities for peer-to-peer engagement, and experiences in collaborative work completed on cloud-based systems (i.e. Google Hangouts, shared documents). A sensitivity to screen time will be used by the teacher based on the developmental needs and age of the students.

More specific programming and operational details will be shared as Opening Day 2020 approaches!

Take good care,

Jeff Mohre
Superintendent of Schools